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Blake NORTHCOTT
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COVER A

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT Iris #1

THE MIDST OF CHAOS



**Aspen Comics' Most
Mind-Bending Concept
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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT IRIS™

"THE MIDST OF CHAOS"

The story so far...

They are raised from their youth with strict obedience and brutally trained to protect and serve their respective masters with discipline, loyalty and often times violence, if necessary. They are the Executive Assistants.



BLAKE NORTHCOTT
- STORY -

DONNY TRAN
- PENCILS AND DIGITAL INKS -

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& OMI REMALANTE JR. (pg. 17-20)
- COLORS -

JAYMES REED
- LETTERS -

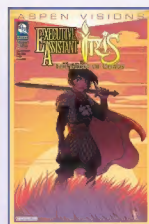
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- EDITORS -

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- DESIGN -

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NORTHERN WEI
DYNASTY, 42-7 CE

I
N THE MIDST OF CHAOS
THERE IS ALSO OPPORTUNITY.

MY SENSEI READ
THAT PASSAGE TO
ME AS A CHILD.

"BUT WHAT IF
THERE IS NO
CHAOS?" I ASKED.

HE CRACKED A
MISCHIEVOUS SMILE AND
SAID, "IRIS, THE ANSWER
IS SIMPLE..."



"...CREATE
SOME CHAOS
OF YOUR OWN."



CREATING CHAOS
IS SIMPLE. LIGHTING
A FIRE, BURNING A
FOREST-- IT TAKES NO
SKILL, NO DISCIPLINE.



IT'S GENERAL IRIS!
SHE'S HERE, IN THE
CAMP! QUICK,
GET YOUR--

BUT MAYHEM
COMES AT A PRICE.



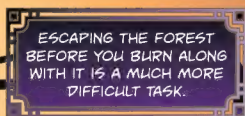
STARTING THE FIRE
IS THE EASY PART
OF THE EQUATION.



NGGH!

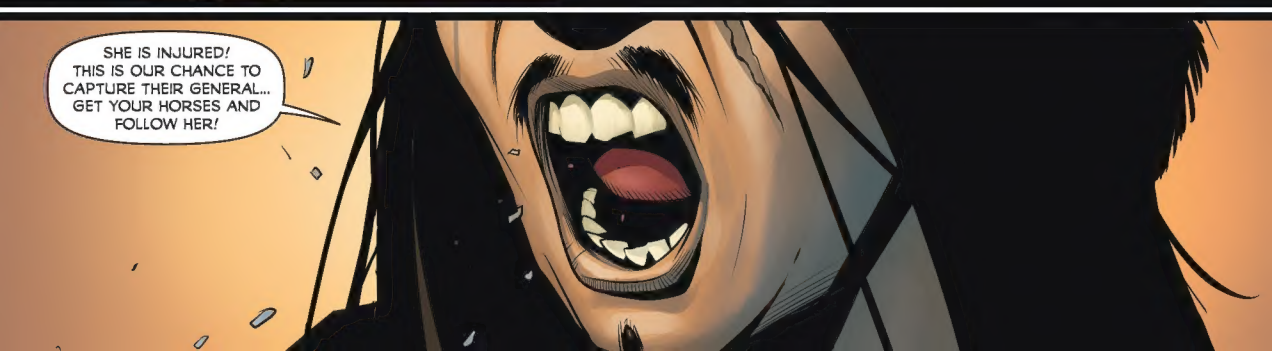


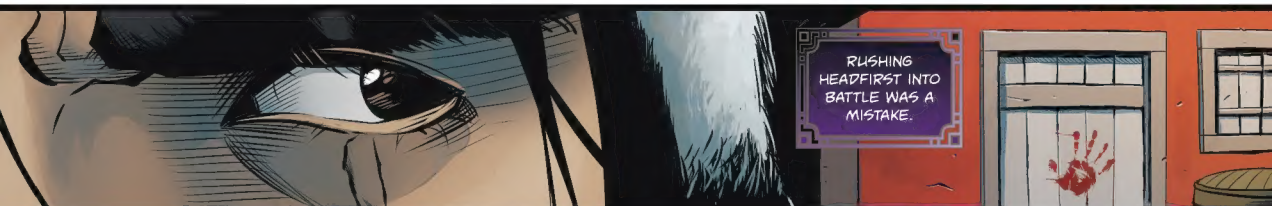
ESCAPING THE FOREST
BEFORE YOU BURN ALONG
WITH IT IS A MUCH MORE
DIFFICULT TASK.



HI-YAAH!

SHE IS INJURED!
THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO
CAPTURE THEIR GENERAL...
GET YOUR HORSES AND
FOLLOW HER!



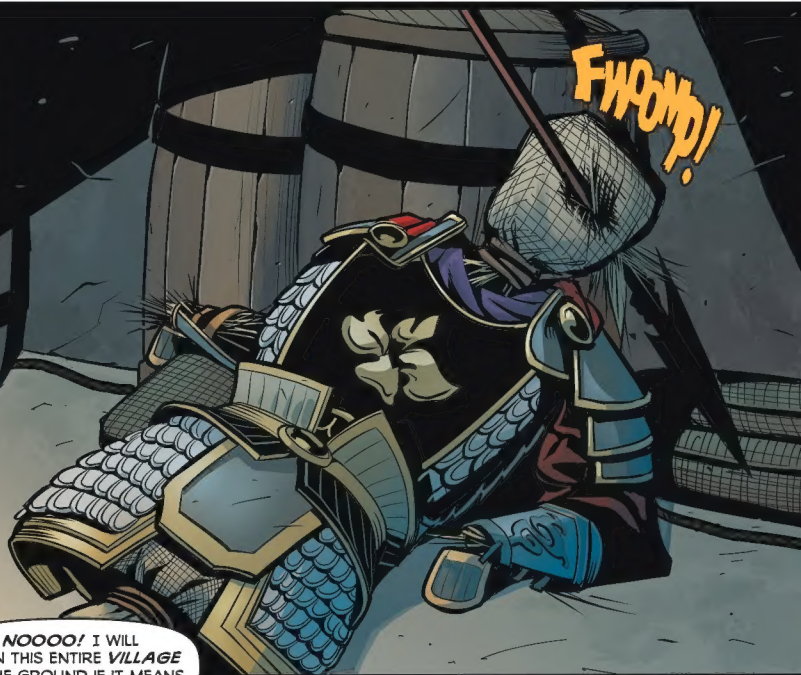




I WILL HAVE
YOUR HEAD AS
A TROPHY!



NO... NO,
THIS CAN'T
BE...



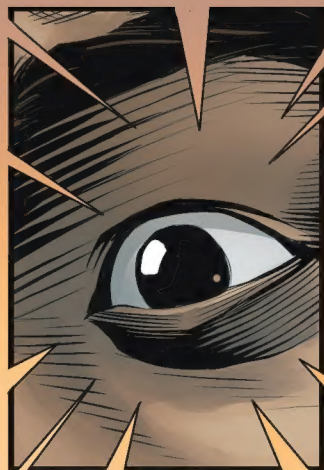
FWOMP!



NOOOO! I WILL
BURN THIS ENTIRE *VILLAGE*
TO THE GROUND IF IT MEANS
KILLING YOU, IRIS!

YOU SHOULD
COME *SEE* THIS.
THERE ARE BARRELS OUT
HERE, AND THEY'RE FILLED
WITH SOMETHING...
STRANGE.

IT'S SOME
TYPE OF... *BLACK
POWDER?*



THEY SHOULD
HAVE KNOWN
BETTER.



ANOTHER
DAY. ANOTHER
FOOLISH PLAN.

WHO IS THE FOOL:
THE ONE WITH THE
FOOLISH PLAN, OR
THE FOOLS WHO
FALL PREY TO IT?



WHY DO YOU
ALWAYS ANSWER
A **QUESTION** WITH
ANOTHER QUESTION,
GENERAL IRIS?

YOU
ANSWERED
YOUR OWN
QUESTION,
SHAN-YU.

WHEN YOU ARE
THE GENERAL, YOU
HAVE THE LUXURY OF
GIVING ANY ANSWER
YOU PLEASE.



GREETINGS,
GENERAL IRIS.
THE USUAL?

MORE OR LESS.
I HAVE ONLY A FEW
BUMPS AND BRUISES...
NOTHING OF
CONCERN.



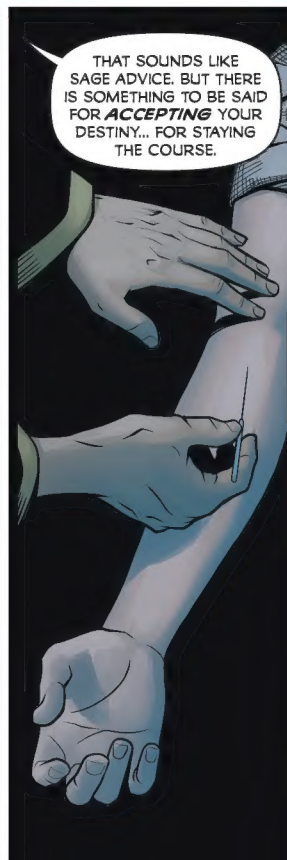
THAT LOOKS LIKE
QUITE A BIT **MORE**
THAN A SIMPLE
BRUISE, GENERAL.

I HAVE SOME
OINTMENT THAT WILL
HELP. IF YOU REMAIN
STILL, I CAN REMOVE THE
ARROW WITH MINIMAL
DAMAGE TO YOUR--



ANOTHER PLAN GONE
AWRY, I ASSUME? THE MORE
RECKLESS YOU BECOME, THE
MORE FREQUENT OUR VISITS
ARE BECOMING, GENERAL.

I WAS ONCE TOLD
THAT WHEN YOU START TO
MEET WITH RESISTANCE, IT IS
A SIGN YOU ARE ON THE
CORRECT PATH.

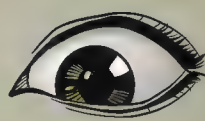
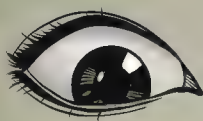


THAT SOUNDS LIKE
SAGE ADVICE. BUT THERE
IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID
FOR **ACCEPTING** YOUR
DESTINY... FOR STAYING
THE COURSE.



YOU HAVE KEPT
THE DYNASTY
SAFE WITH PLANS
AND STRUCTURE.
ONE WRONG
MOVE COULD--

WHAT WAS...
WHERE WAS
THAT?!



WHAT IS IT, GENERAL?
DID I APPLY TOO MUCH
PRESSURE? IS IT YOUR
SHOULDER... PERHAPS YOU
ARE GOING INTO SHOCK
FROM BLOOD LOSS.

NO, FEI HONG, YOU
DID NOTHING WRONG.
AND MY SHOULDER IS
FINE. IT IS JUST THAT...

THANK YOU. I AM
FEELING MUCH BETTER. I...
I NEED TO PREPARE FOR
THE MORNING BATTLE.

THE NORTHERN
WEI DYNASTY'S
SOUTHERN
BORDER.

NESTOR AND HIS ARMY OF HUNS
ARE ALWAYS PREPARED. THEY
ALWAYS THIRST FOR BLOOD. AND
THEIR NUMBERS ARE ALWAYS
GREATER THAN OURS.

IT HAS BEEN THIS
WAY FOR LONGER THAN I
CAN REMEMBER.

I HAVE NO DOUBT
THAT TODAY WILL
BE THE SAME.



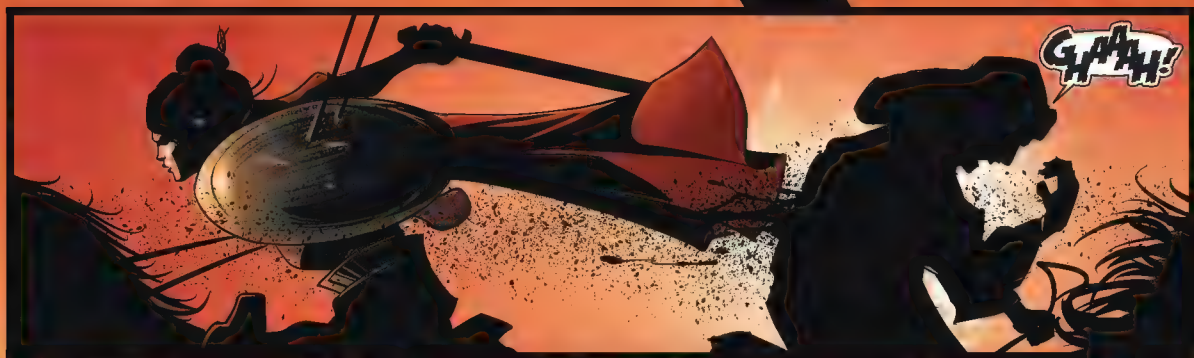
INCOMING!
SHIELDS UP!



NOT A
SINGLE
HUN
WILL
STEP
FOOT
ON OUR
LAND!

RAIN
HELL
ON
THEM!





DAY AFTER DAY, MONTH
AFTER MONTH, YEAR AFTER
YEAR, THE HUNS ATTACK.
THE RAIDS ARE CEASELESS,
LIKE WAVES ENDLESSLY
CRASHING A BEACH.

THEY
CHALLENGE, WE
DEFEND.



THEY SPILL OUR
BLOOD, WE SPILL
THEIRS IN KIND.

THEY COME FROM BLACKWATER HALL, A
CASTLE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN BREACHED. THE
STRONGHOLD SITS ON AN ISLAND, BEYOND AN
IMPENETRABLE SWATHE OF LAND AS FIERCE AS
THE WARRIORS WHO DEFEND IT.



NESTOR, WITH HIS HEART
OF ETERNITY, IS ALWAYS
AT THEIR COMMAND.



IT'S TIME TO
FINISH THIS. CALL
THEM IN.

AND WHERE NESTOR
APPEARS, HIS WINGED
NIGHTMARES ARE
NEVER FAR BEHIND.



THE HEART GIVES
NESTOR POWER OVER
THE CREATURES, OR SO
THE STORIES GO.

NO ONE HAS GOTTEN
CLOSE ENOUGH TO RIP
THE GEM FROM HIS
GRASP. A WALL OF
HUNS AND MONSTERS
ALWAYS SEPARATE US.

FWOOOOOM!

TAKE IT
DOWN!

THE ODDS
ALWAYS SEEM
INSURMOUNTABLE.

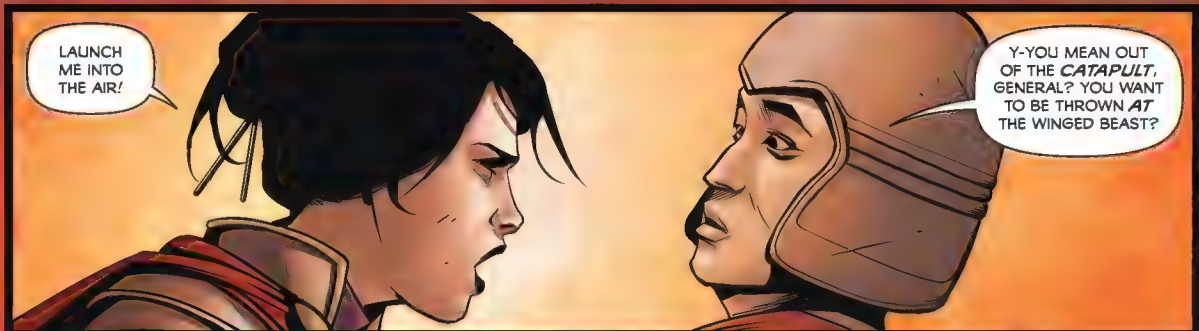
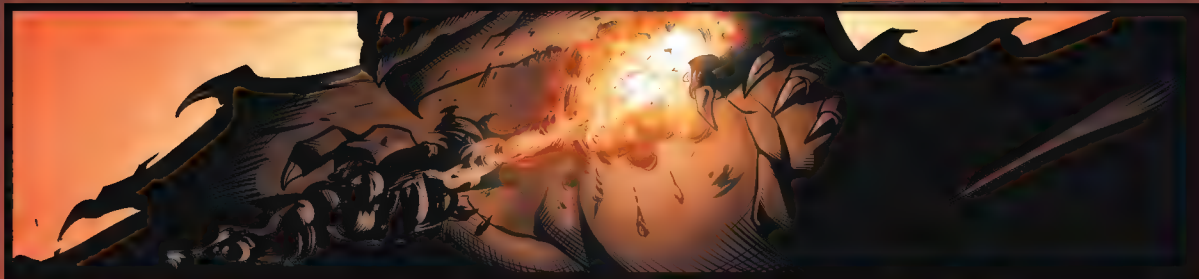
Krk

Krk

Krk

THE WINGED CREATURES
ARE IMPERVIOUS TO FIRE,
TO SPEARS, TO ARROWS.





LAUNCH
ME INTO
THE AIR!

Y-YOU MEAN OUT
OF THE *CATAPULT*,
GENERAL? YOU WANT
TO BE THROWN *AT*
THE WINGED BEAST?



WAIT... JUST
A MOMENT...



NOTHING IS
IMMUNE. NO ONE
IS IMMORTAL. IF THIS
CREATURE CAN
BREATHE FIRE...



I CAN STOP IT FROM **BREATHING** ALTOGETHER.

KRRRAWW!



KRRRAWW!



THE CREATURE IS DEAD, THE HUNS HAVE BEEN BATTERED, AND VICTORY ONCE AGAIN GOES TO THE DYNASTY.

MY PEOPLE REMAIN SAFE. OUR LAND REMAINS SOVEREIGN.

SO WHY DO I FEEL SO HOLLOW?

WHY DO I FEEL SOMETHING IS MISSING?



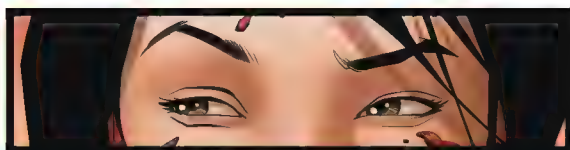
NO MATTER, WE SHALL RETURN TOMORROW WITH FRESH HORRORS.

RETREAT! BACK TO THE CAMP!



ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER FOOLISH PLAN.

WHO IS THE FOOL: THE ONE WITH THE FOOLISH PLAN, OR...



SHAN-YU, TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

WE BATTLED THE HUNS, OF COURSE. YOU BRAVELY FOUGHT THEM OFF, AND NESTOR NARROWLY ESCAPED WITH THE HEART OF ETERNITY.



AND THE DAY BEFORE THAT? AND THE YEAR BEFORE?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, GENERAL. THIS IS OUR *FATE*, AND WE MUST ACCEPT IT: TO PROTECT THE DYNASTY FROM THE HUNS. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY, AND ALWAYS WILL BE.



THIS IS NOT FATE: THIS IS *REPETITION*. WE FIGHT, WE WIN, AND ON AND ON IT GOES.

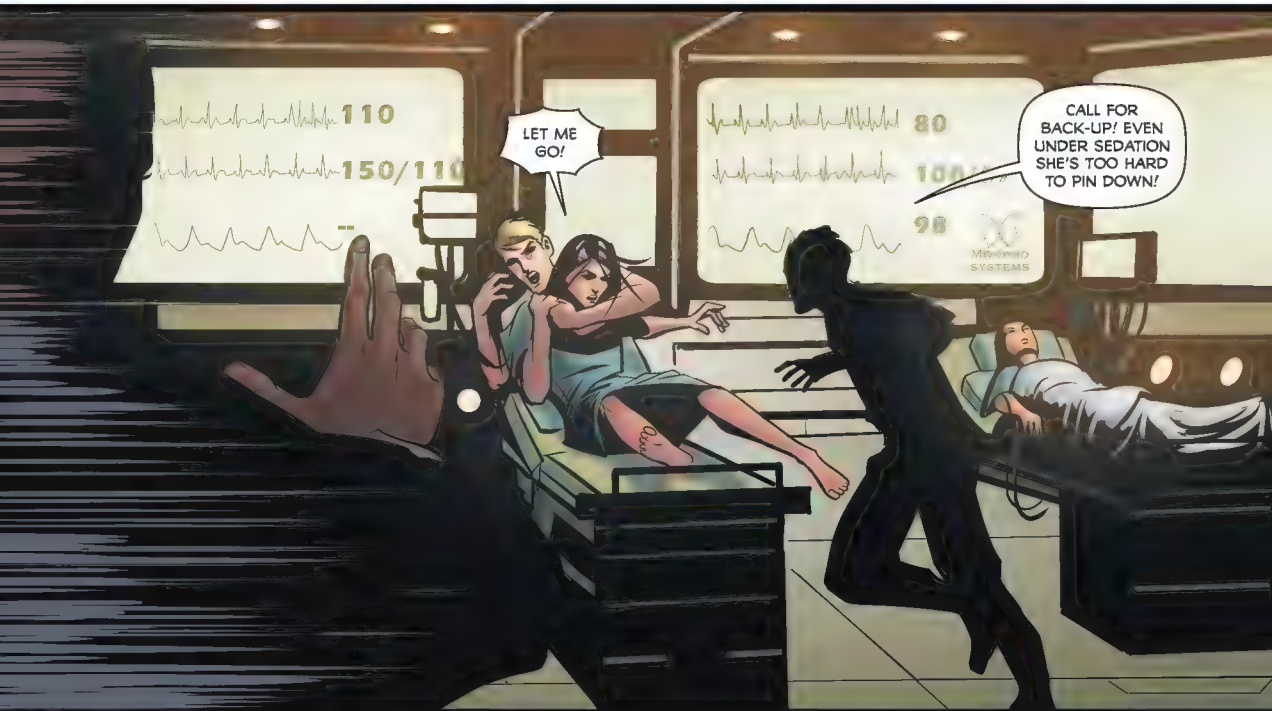
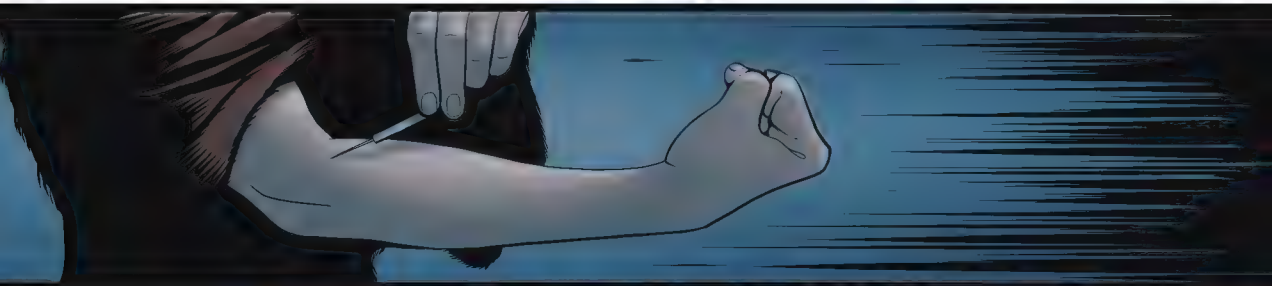
WE NEVER CAPTURE NESTOR, AND WE NEVER FINISH THE HUNS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

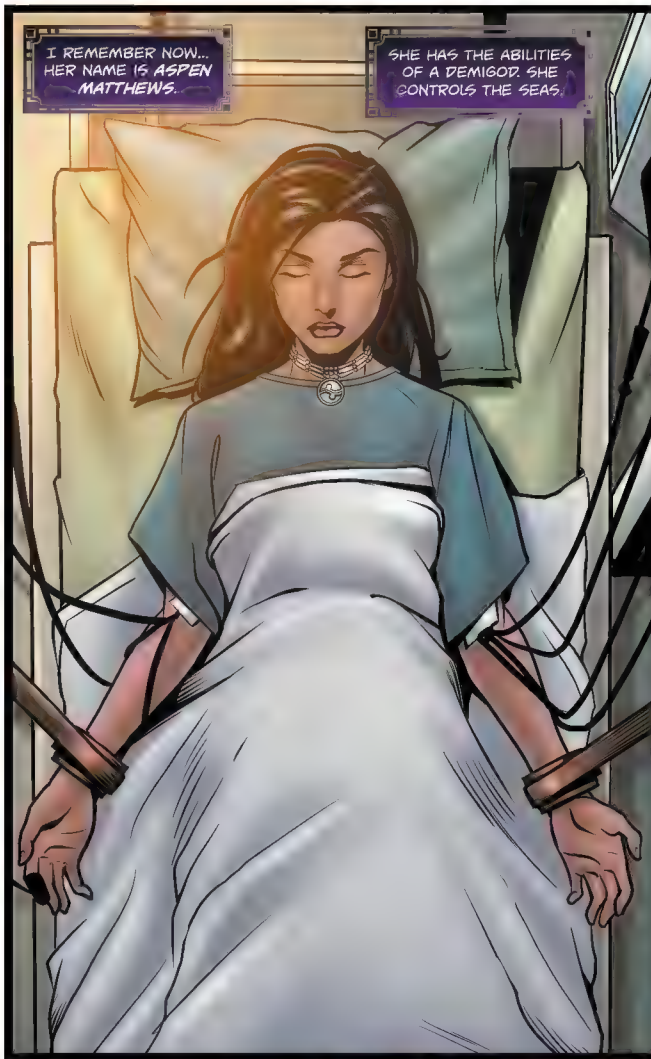
NESTOR HAS THE HEART OF ETERNITY, HE COMMANDS AN ENDLESS ARMY, HE FILLS OUR SKIES WITH WINGED CREATURES, AND HE FLEES TO HIS FORTRESS AFTER EACH BATTLE.

HOW *CAN* WE CHANGE ANYTHING?



WE *DECIDE*.





I REMEMBER NOW...
HER NAME IS ASPEN
MATTHEWS.

SHE HAS THE ABILITIES
OF A DEMIGOD. SHE
CONTROLS THE SEAS.



BUT HOW COULD
SOMEONE SO POWERFUL
HAVE BEEN CAPTURED...



I KNOW WHAT
NEEDS TO BE DONE. I
WILL CONFRONT NESTOR ON
HIS OWN LAND. AT
BLACKWATER.

BUT GENERAL...
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT,
THAT HAS NEVER BEEN
DONE BEFORE!



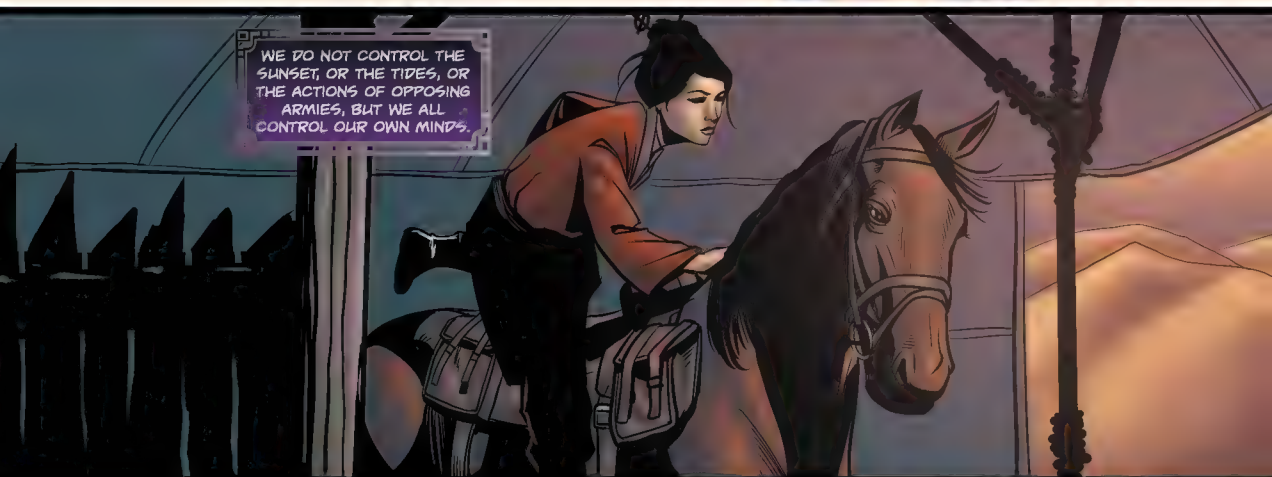
NO ARMY HAS EVER
SEEN BLACKWATER HALL
AND LIVED TO TELL ABOUT
IT! PLEASE, LISTEN TO
REASON!

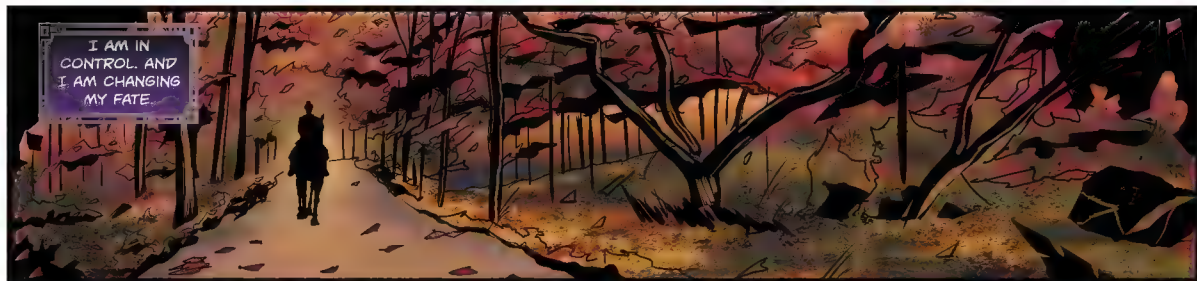


NESTOR'S ARMY TELLS US TO ACCEPT OUR FATE. THEY *CHANT* IT, PLANTING THE SEED IN OUR MINDS. MY OWN SOLDIERS REPEAT THE SAME MANTRA.



THERE IS A WORD THAT MEANS TO ACCEPT ONE'S FATE WITHOUT RESISTANCE. **SURRENDER.**

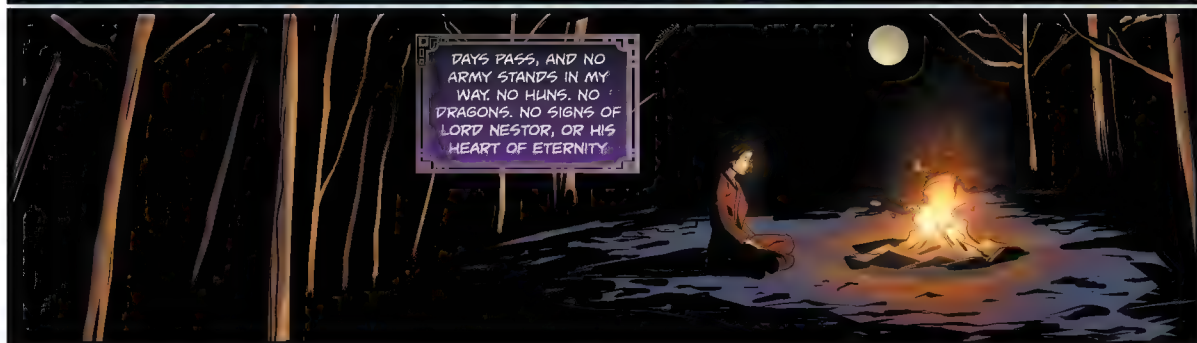




I AM IN
CONTROL AND
I AM CHANGING
MY FATE.



THE TREK ACROSS
NESTOR'S KINGDOM TO
THE SOUTH IS PERILOUS.
THE WINDS ARE FIERCE,
THE SNOW IS PUNISHING.



DAYS PASS, AND NO
ARMY STANDS IN MY
WAY. NO HUMANS. NO
DRAGONS. NO SIGNS OF
LORD NESTOR, OR HIS
HEART OF ETERNITY.




WHAT LIES AT THE
END OF THE WORLD
HAS BEEN NOTHING
MORE THAN MYTH TO
THE PEOPLE OF THE
NORTHERN WEI
DYNASTY.

TALES OF SEA
CREATURES, AND
LAKES OF FIRE, AND
THE CERTAIN DEATH
THAT AWAITS.



STORIES DESIGNED
TO FRIGHTEN US INTO
COMPLACENCY.



I DO NOT KNOW IF ASPEN
MATTHEWS IS BEING HELD
IN BLACKWATER HALL, BUT
SOMETHING TELLS ME I
MUST FIND HER.

NO... THIS CANNOT BE.
THE WORLD HAS BEEN
ERASED. OR PERHAPS
THIS IS WHERE IT
BEGINS?

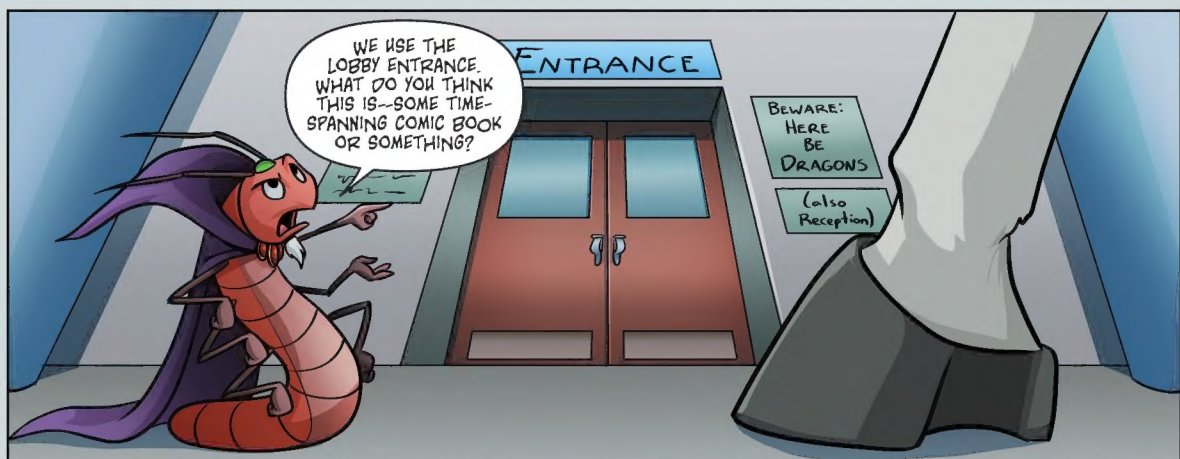
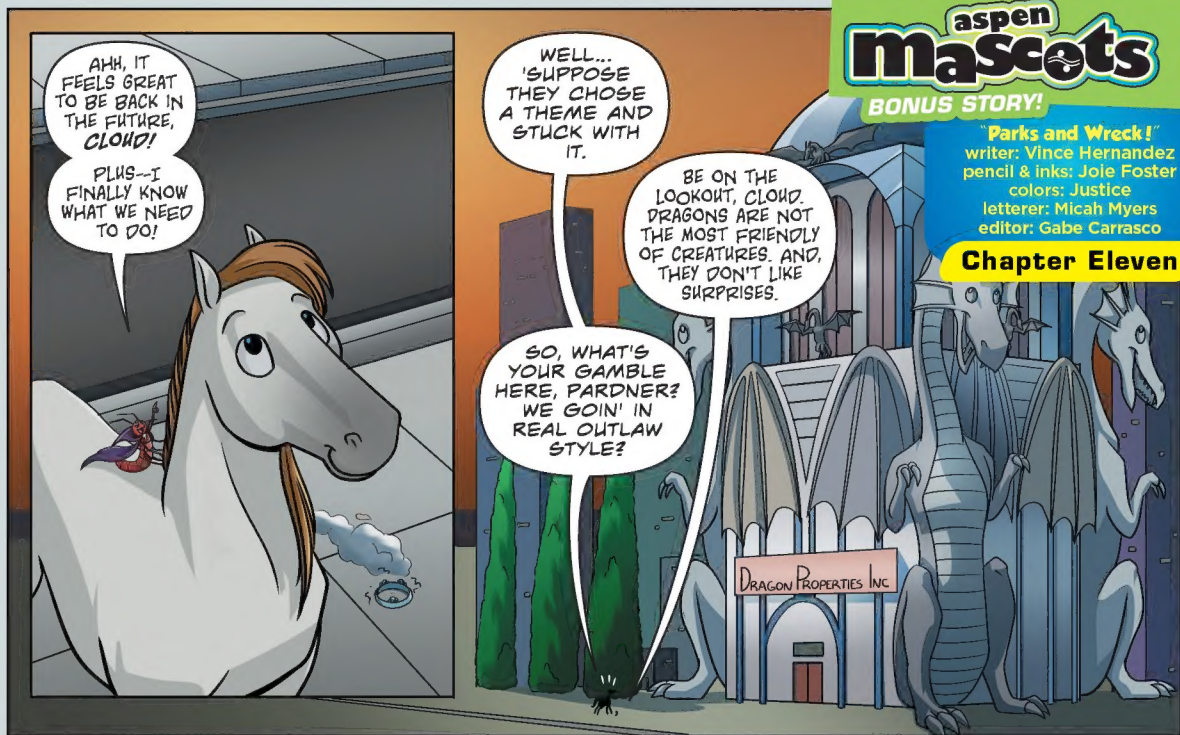
I AM BEING HELD CAPTIVE,
SHACKLED BY INVISIBLE CHAINS.
LOCKED IN A FALSE REALITY. BUT
THESE MAGICS ARE UNSTABLE,
TEARING APART AT THE SEAMS.

I CANNOT IMAGINE WHERE
THIS EMPTINESS LEADS, BUT
SOMETHING --OR SOMEONE--
HAS BEEN HIDING IT FROM ME.
WHICH MEANS THEY ARE AFRAID
OF WHAT I MIGHT DISCOVER.

AND THAT IS
WHY THIS MUST
BE THE CORRECT
PATH TO TAKE



TO BE CONTINUED:
ASPEN VISIONS
MICHAEL TURNER'S
FATHOM
SPINNING OUR FATE

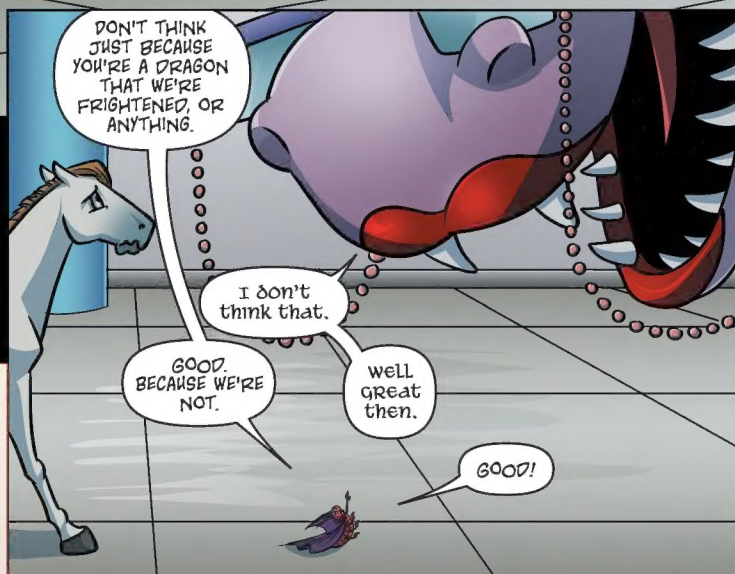




DRAGON!

well, yes...
this is dragon
properties, inc.,
after all.

how may
i direct your
business?



DON'T THINK
JUST BECAUSE
YOU'RE A DRAGON
THAT WE'RE
FRIGHTENED, OR
ANYTHING.

i don't
think that.

GOOD.
BECAUSE WE'RE
NOT.

well,
great
then.

GOOD!



AHEM--

I THINK
YOU WERE
LOOKING FOR
THE PEOPLE IN
CHARGE OF PARK
CONSTRUCTION,
WORMIER.

oh, parks
and rec--that's
the top floor.
red division.



WHAT?

I DIDN'T
SAY ANY-
THING.

I WASN'T
SCARED BACK
THERE.

DIDN'T
SAY YOU
WERE, CHIEF.
NEITHER
WAS I.

SO WE
BOTH WEREN'T.
MAKES SENSE.

HOW LONG
DOES THIS
THING TAKE
ANYWAY?!

DING



OKAY. NOW, I'M SCARED.



don't be alarmed. the name's suncrest.

this is fieldcrest, and that's goldcrest and stormcrest. that guy over there--that's... well, that's piecrust.

we're the red division of dragon properties, inc.



um...okay--look here, dragons. this "dragon park" you plan on building..? it's smack dab in the center of **my village!** do you know what that means for us?!!

I demand a cease and desist to your bulldozers at once!

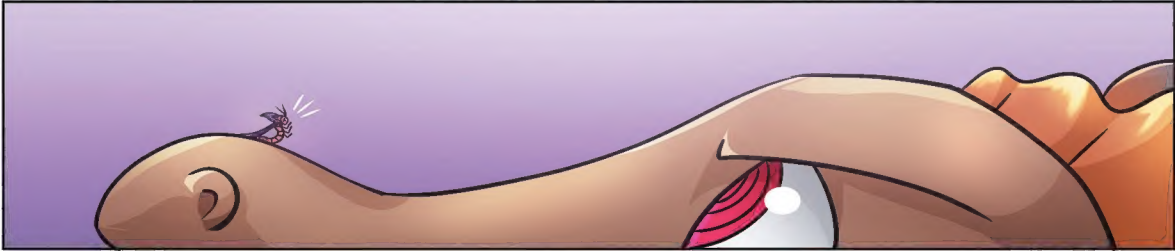
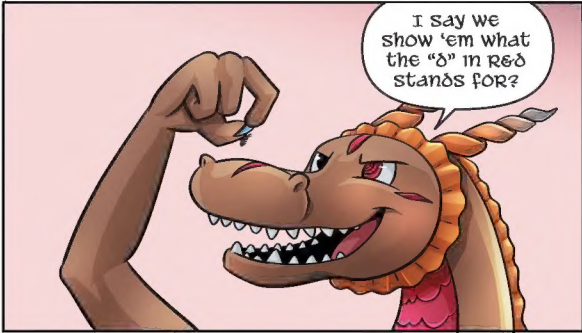
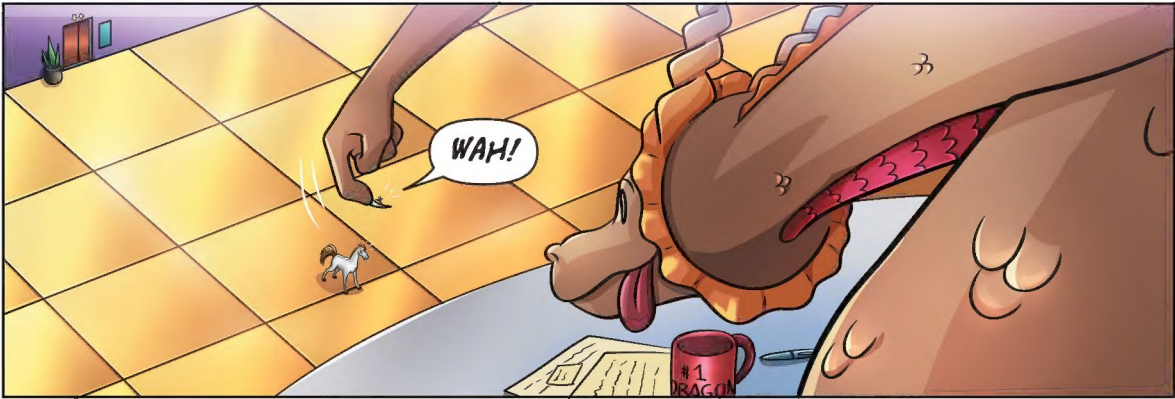


you are quite the angry little worm~~ I loooove that!

what is your name? do worms have names?

WHH--WORMIER. AND I'M SERIOUS ABOUT MY VILLAGE!

well then we have no choice, little one...



To Be Concluded
Chapter Twelve
Coming Next Issue!